IOWA BIRD LIFE

Winter 1993 Volume 63 Number 1



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

* 14-16 May 1993 , Keosauqua

FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

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CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January. For forms and instructions write: W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653.

IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056).

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The following materials may be obtained by writing the editorial office (Iowa Bird Life, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010):

*Order form for back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*: send self-addressed stamped envelope.
*Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1992 Edition: 6 for $1.00, postpaid. Also available at annual meetings.

REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa. The Nebraska Bird Line, available 24 hours a day, is 402-292-5325. Iowa birders are encouraged to report their Nebraska sightings to this number.

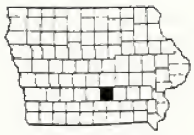
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FIRST RECORD OF A MARBLED MURRELET FOR IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



At 3:15 p.m. on 12 December 1991, Brian Warson and I observed a basic-plumaged Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) at Red Rock Reservoir, Marion County. The bird was swimming alone in a large area of open water near Whitebreast Cove on the south side of the reservoir. We watched the bird with a 20-60 power spotting scope until 3:24 p.m. as it swam westward along the south shore of the reservoir, about 200 meters offshore.

When I first saw the bird, I thought it was a Horned Grebe. But after watching the bird for about a minute, it was apparent that I was looking at a small alcid. The short neck, head posture, and conspicuous white patches on each flank were very unlike a grebe. I studied the bird for the next nine minutes, at which time it flew a short distance, dove, and never reappeared. Size was hard to judge, since there were no other birds for direct comparison. I estimated the bird to be the size of, or slightly smaller than, a Horned Grebe. The overall posture and shape of the bird was very reminiscent of a loon, except that the bird had a shorter, thicker neck and a larger head. The head was held tilted slightly upward, like that of a cormorant. The bird rode very low to the water, often disappearing behind wave crests for periods of a few seconds. The bill was almost equal to the length of the head, looked black, was straight, and was quite thin and pointed at the tip. The bill shape reminded me of that of a tern (i.e., Forster's). The forehead, crown, and cheek were black. Eye color was not noted. The mantle, wings, uppertail, and back of the neck were also black. The chin, throat, underparts, and undertail were white, with the white color extending posteriorly around the midneck, forming an almost complete white collar. The most conspicuous markings on the bird were the two white oval-shaped patches on each side. To me, the patches appeared to be about the same length and ran parallel to the waterline. The posterior patch was clearly a flank patch. The anterior patch, however, was more intriguing. During the brief look I had of the bird in flight, I did not notice the exact position of the white patch I saw. In later consultation with field guides, I learned that this patch is formed by the white scapulars, which show up in flight as a thin white line at the base of each wing. I was not able to confirm this fieldmark in flight. The bird had a distinct shape in flight: chunky body and very thin, rounded wings. The underwings, as seen in flight, appeared pale, though definitely not as pale as the underparts. I was not able to see the feet and legs when the bird was flying. The bird flew with very rapid wingbeats and low to the water during the short flight it made. After the bird flew and was not immediately relocated, I left to try to notify other birders. Brian Warson remained to continue to look for the bird but never relocated it.

On the basis of the above features, I identified the bird as a winter-plumaged Marbled Murrelet. The small size of the bird eliminates all of the large alcids from consideration, such as murres, Razorbill, and guillemots. Dovekie, Ancient Murrelet, and all of the auklets differ from this bird by having shorter, stubbier bills. Separation from other murrelets, especially Kittlitz's Murrelet, is based on the presence of two obvious white patches on each side of the bird, a dark cap that included the eye, and to a lesser extent by bill shape. Kittlitz's Murrelet has a shorter bill than this bird had.

Marbled Murrelets are extremely rare vagrants in interior North America. The North American subspecies *B. m. marmoratus* breeds along the West Coast of North America but is not known to wander inland. The Asiatic subspecies *B. m. perdix*, which nests along the coast of Siberia and northern Japan, is known from specimens in interior North America (Jehl and Jehl 1981, Sealy et al. 1991). Sealy et al. (1991) list ten extralimital specimen records, all *B. m. perdix*, and three other inland sight records that could not be classified as one subspecies or the other, but were assumed also to be *B. m. perdix*. Based on these records, the timing of vagrancy appears to be late summer/early winter. Monthly records were as follows: July (2), August (5), September (1), October (1), November (1), and December (3). Records were widely scattered and occurred in Alaska (1), California (4), Colorado (1), Indiana (2), Massachusetts (1), Florida (1), Saskatchewan (1), Quebec (1), and Newfoundland (1). The two subspecies are separated by, among other features, the length of the exposed culmen (Sealy et al 1992), Sealy et al. 1991). *B. m. perdix* has an exposed culmen length greater than 18 mm. While the chance of a Marbled Murrelet reaching Iowa seems remote, it should be noted that this bird occurred at a time when such records might be expected. Also, the murrelet I observed appeared to have a bill longer than those pictured in many field guides, indicating to me that the bird may have been *B. m. perdix*. Such a sighting would concur with other inland occurrences of Marbled Murrelets. This is the first record of this species from Iowa or the Upper Midwest.

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EARLY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN IOWA

JAMES J. DINSMORE

Christmas Bird Counts (hereafter CBCs) are one of the most popular birding activities in North America. Since these counts were begun in 1900, participation has increased greatly. In 1991, about 43,500 individuals took part in about 1,650 counts in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. Despite this interest, little has been written about the history of CBCs in Iowa. Starting with the 1937 count, an annual summary of Iowa CBCs has been published in *Iowa Bird Life*. A summary of 20 years of Iowa CBCs (1937-1956) was the first summary of long-term CBC data for Iowa (Brown 1957). However, other than a list of the counts (Pierce 1938), no one has summarized data from Iowa's CBCs prior to 1937. The goal of this paper is to summarize those data and to compare the results of those counts with information from recent Iowa CBCs.

METHODS

I systematically went through back issues of *Bird-Lore* from 1901 to 1937 and extracted information on all Iowa CBCs. I also collected data on a few CBCs that were published in *Iowa Bird Life* from 1931-1937 but not in *Bird-Lore*. For each CBC, I compiled data on the year and location, the number of species seen, and which species were seen. To make the counts more comparable to recent counts, I excluded reports of a few species where I considered the identification questionable. Thus all reports of Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Gray Owl, and Chipping Sparrow were excluded here. I assume that a "Hoot Owl" was probably a Great Horned Owl but excluded it too. In following current practice, I combined all reports of meadowlarks as meadowlark species. There were few reports of shrikes, mostly Northern Shrike, and I left them as they were originally reported.

RESULTS

The first CBC in Iowa was made by Rett Olmstead of Decorah on 25 December 1903. He saw nine species and 34 individuals. No more CBCs were done in Iowa until 1906 when counts were held at Cedar Rapids and Waukon. Grinnell and Cedar Rapids held counts in 1907, and National and Wall Lake held counts the next year. The number of CBCs per year gradually increased (Tables 1 and 2), and at least one CBC has been held in Iowa yearly since 1906.

From 1903-1936, a total of 170 CBCs (158 reported in *Bird-Lore* and 12 in *Iowa Bird Life*) were held in 36 Iowa towns and cities. Thirteen of those counts were held at least five times (Table 3) and comprise 75% of the counts. Counts were run only once at 11 sites. Many of the counts were started under the leadership of a prominent Iowa birder. Thus long running CBCs in such small towns as Winthrop, Pierson, Ogden, and Wall Lake are a testament to the endeavors of Fred Pierce, Wier Mills, Walter Rosene, and John A. Spurrell respectively.

A total of 95 species were seen on those counts (Tables 1 and 2). These include the typical winter residents one expects to see in Iowa along with a variety of rarer species. Only four species (Hairy Woodpecker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch) were seen on at least one Iowa CBC in all 32

years that counts were held. Nineteen more species were seen in at least half of the 32 years (Table 4).

Starting with the count of nine species on the Decorah CBC in 1903, the highest individual count in Iowa reached double figures when 10 species were found at Grinnell in 1907. The peak count didn't break 20 until 1920 when 23 species were found at Bettendorf. In 1926, a count topped the 30 barrier when 35 species were found in Des Moines, and in 1932, a then astounding 43 species were found in Des Moines (Table 1).

Table 1. Yearly statistics for Christmas Bird Counts in Iowa, 1903-1936.

year	number of counts	highest count	site of high count	total species	cumulative species
1903	1	9	Decorah	9	9
1906	2	9	Cedar Rapids	10	13
1907	2	10	Grinnell	10	15
1908	2	8	National	13	21
1909	4	9	Sioux City	17	25
1910	4	15	Sioux City	18	29
1911	4	13	Sabula	17	32
1912	2	10	Sioux City	11	32
1913	2	13	Sioux City	17	34
1914	3	10	Sioux City, Wallingford	15	35
1915	4	14	Lanesboro	17	40
1916	3	15	Sioux City	28	48
1917	3	17	Bettendorf	24	51
1918	1	11	Sioux City	11	51
1919	3	18	Iowa City	22	55
1920	3	23	Bettendorf	28	64
1921	8	22	Keokuk, Oskaloosa	42	67
1922	10	20	Bettendorf	43	70
1923	10	23	Des Moines	45	73
1924	4	27	Des Moines	32	73
1925	10	28	Des Moines	48	78
1926	8	35	Des Moines	53	81
1927	7	30	Des Moines	43	82
1928	8	31	Des Moines	43	84
1929	8	29	Des Moines	40	84
1930	12	34	Des Moines	51	86
1931	6	36	Des Moines	47	88
1932	5	43	Des Moines	51	91
1933	7	35	Des Moines	44	94
1934	8	33	Des Moines	41	94
1935	7	37	Des Moines	47	95
1936	9	34	Des Moines	45	95

Thirteen different CBCs led the state in number of species reported in a given year (Table 1). In most cases, a site led the state only one year during the era. Prior to 1920, Sioux City led the state seven times, far more than any other count. Starting in 1923, Des Moines led the state for 19 straight years until 1942 when Waubonsie State Park finally dethroned them.

The total number of species seen on all counts per year also showed steady growth up to the 1930s and then leveled off (Tables 1 and 2). The yearly total broke the 20 barrier when 28 species were tallied in 1916 and shot up to a total of 42 in 1921. The 53 species reported in 1926 was the most reported in this era and was not exceeded until 1938 when 57 species were reported (Brown 1957).

The cumulative total of species seen through the years shows steady growth with at least one new species being added in all but six years (Table 1). In two years there were bursts of growth of this list; 1916 when eight new species were added and 1920 when nine were added. In both of those years, a relatively modest number of counts were held so apparently birders just happened to find a number of new species.

Table 2. Summary statistics by decade for Christmas Bird Counts in Iowa from 1903-1936.

decade	no. of counts	counts/yr.	no. of species
1903-1909	11	2.2	25
1910-1919	29	2.9	50
1920-1929	76	7.6	79
1930-1936	54	7.7	75
totals	170	5.3	95

Some of the more interesting results relate to individual species or groups of birds. Water birds were poorly represented on many of these early counts. The first duck of any species reported on an Iowa CBC was Lesser Scaup at Sabula in 1911. Mallards were not reported on an Iowa CBC until 1922 at Des Moines. American Black Duck was reported only two years (Keokuk in 1921 and 1925) and Snow Goose only one (Des Moines, 1933). Killdeer (Des Moines, 1933) and Great Blue Heron (Backbone State Park, 1935) both were reported only one year, Ring-billed Gull two years, and Common Snipe only four years.

Table 3. Iowa sites that held at least five Christmas Bird Counts from 1903 to 1936.

location	number yrs held	highest count	inclusive years
Ames	7	18	1923-1930
Backbone State Park	6	20	1923-1936
Bettendorf	7	23	1915-1930
Davenport	5	22	1917-1934
Des Moines	17	43	1910-1936
Iowa City	5	21	1919-1926
Keokuk	8	22	1921-1931
Ogden	14	28	1922-1936
Pierson	15	20	1921-1936
Sigourney	5	25	1927-1931
Sioux City	21	27	1909-1936
Wall Lake	7	8	1908-1914
Winthrop	10	24	1920-1931

As expected, a few rarities were found although much less often than in recent years. Easily the top find was a Lewis's Woodpecker at Sioux City in 1928, the first record for the state. Other rarities include a Northern Mockingbird at Ogden and a

Sedge Wren in Des Moines, and a Pine Grosbeak at Wallingford (1914) and Backbone State Park (1923). In all, 18 species were seen on only one CBC in this era (Table 5).

Greater Prairie-Chickens were reported regularly from several counts in northwestern Iowa up until the mid-1920s. The last reports of prairie-chickens on the CBCs considered here were at Ogden and Sioux City in 1930. They were present at Ogden in 1932 but could not be found the day of the count. The last reports of prairie-chickens on an Iowa CBC were in 1939 when they were found at Pierson and New Hartford (Brown 1957).

Table 4. Species seen on Christmas Bird Counts in at least half of the 32 years counts were held, 1903-1936.

species	no. years	species	no. years
Red-tailed Hawk	20	Blue Jay	31
Rough-legged Hawk	16	American Crow	32
Northern Bobwhite	18	Black-capped Chickadee	32
Eastern Screech-Owl	25	Tufted Titmouse	20
Barred Owl	16	White-breasted Nuthatch	32
Short-eared Owl	16	Brown Creeper	29
Northern Flicker	26	Northern Cardinal	23
Red-bellied Woodpecker	20	American Tree Sparrow	30
Red-headed Woodpecker	17	Song Sparrow	18
Hairy Woodpecker	32	Dark-eyed Junco	29
Downy Woodpecker	31	Purple Finch	18
Horned Lark	22	American Goldfinch	26

Black-billed Magpies were reported at Sioux City (1915), Emmetsburg (1922), Ogden and Pierson (1936), and were present at Sioux City during the count period in 1919. Invasions of magpies in northwestern Iowa were fairly regular in those years whereas there have been few reports of magpies in Iowa in the past 30 years, the most recent being one at Sioux City on the 1990 CBC (Silcock 1991).

Table 5. Species seen on only one Iowa Christmas Bird Count from 1903-1936.

Common Loon--Bettendorf, 1920	Snowy Owl--Sioux City, 1909
Great Blue Heron--Backbone St. Pk, 1935	Lewis's Woodpecker--Sioux City, 1928
Snow Goose--Des Moines, 1933	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker--Iowa City, 1926
Green-winged Teal--Des Moines, 1932	Sedge Wren--Des Moines, 1932
Canvasback--Bettendorf, 1922	Northern Mockingbird--Ogden, 1932
Ring-necked Duck--Des Moines, 1931	Loggerhead Shrike--Sigourney, 1931
Northern Goshawk--Sioux City, 1916	Field Sparrow--Des Moines, 1926
Killdeer--Des Moines, 1933	Lincoln's Sparrow--Des Moines, 1926
Barn Owl--Des Moines, 1933	Brown-headed Cowbird--Iowa City, 1921

DISCUSSION

Obviously much has changed in Iowa since these early CBCs were held. Land use has changed, the number of birders has increased, and the skills of those involved in CBCs have improved. As a result, there have been changes both in the number of

species that are reported on CBCs and in the relative abundances of the species that are reported.

These early CBCs had far fewer species than recent CBCs in Iowa. Even the high count of 43 at Des Moines in 1932 is only a modest total by today's standards when many CBCs routinely have species totals in the 50s. The average number of species seen per Iowa CBC was 50.4 in 1990 and 47.3 in 1991 (Silcock 1991, 1992), higher than any individual count in this earlier era. The total number of species seen on all of the counts in any of the years covered here (highest is 53 in 1926, Table 1) is fewer than the totals seen on many individual Iowa CBCs in recent years. In contrast, 138 species were seen on Iowa CBCs in 1990-91, and 129 species were seen in 1991-92 (Silcock 1992). The overall total of 95 species seen on the 170 counts is only slightly more than the 92 species reported on one count (Saylorville) in 1990. Several factors account for these differences.

The number of people involved in these early CBCs was small by comparison with today's counts. Most of the CBCs had only one (73 of 170, 43%), two (48, 28%) or three (17, 10%) observers. The average number of observers on CBCs in 1991 was 13.8 (Silcock 1992). Observers on recent CBCs also are more systematic in covering their area. They spend more time in the field, scout the area before the count day to find easily missed species, and in general do a more thorough job of searching out every possible species they can to add to their totals. Also the advent of automobiles and a road system that rapidly takes counters to most parts of their count circle have greatly increased the recent coverage compared to earlier CBCs.

Des Moines was the first Iowa CBC to involve a fairly large number of people in their count and had impressive results. From two observers and 18 species in 1922, their count jumped to 8 observers and 23 species in 1923, 14 and 35 in 1926, and 23 and 43 in 1932.

The competitiveness of birders has also changed. People involved with the various counts compete to have the highest count total in Iowa or try to set a new local count record. Also individual birders routinely participate in several counts. Thus the best birders may participate in several CBCs and help increase the count totals on several counts. The overall result is an increase in the count totals on Iowa CBCs.

The skills of the individuals making CBCs now and the equipment available to them is also better now than in the past. Although no one doubts the birding skills of early observers like Fred Pierce, Walter Rosene, and Philip DuMont, without a doubt modern-day counters have better optical equipment, better knowledge of useful field marks for identification, and better guides to help them with identification. We need to remember that most of the counts considered here were held before the first Peterson field guide appeared in 1934, and binoculars were primitive compared to modern standards.

Habitat changes have made a difference as well. Most of these early CBCs were held at sites away from the major rivers and thus reported few waterbirds. Starting with a count at Sabula in 1910, only 20 of these early CBCs were held at sites on the Mississippi River. In recent years, CBCs on the Mississippi, especially from Davenport south, have had some of the highest species totals in Iowa. The development of the lock and dam system on the Mississippi River has had an effect on the number of waterbirds and Bald Eagles that are reported on Iowa CBCs. Even in areas away from the Mississippi River, there now are more lakes, ponds, or rivers that receive warm water from a power plant, industrial site, or other source and as a result, attract more aquatic species.

Human feeding of birds has probably had an effect on the species totals. With thousands of Iowans now feeding birds regularly every winter, the number of several seed eating birds found in Iowa has increased. Species such as Mourning Dove, Pine Siskin, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch all were regularly missed on many of these early CBCs whereas now they are regular on most Iowa CBCs.

Another subtle factor that may have affected the species totals is the dates the counts were held. Most of these early counts were held on 23 December or later, and only one count was earlier than 22 December. In contrast, many CBCs in recent years have been held on 18 or 19 December. By scheduling the count even a few days earlier, there is a greater likelihood of holding the count before all lakes and rivers freeze over and thereby increasing the count total.

Not surprisingly, there have been changes in the frequency with which various species or groups of species have been reported. The use of tape recorders has helped increase the rate at which owls have been found. From 1931 to 1936, Great Horned Owls were found on only 10 of 42 Iowa CBCs and Barred Owls on 12 of 42. In contrast, in 1991, Great Horned Owls were found on 40 of 48 Iowa CBCs and Barred Owls on 31 of 48 (Silcock 1992). There is also some indication that the relative abundance of several species of owls has changed. The number of years that the four most abundant species of owls were reported on these early CBCs is the opposite of what is typical today. The Eastern Screech Owl was reported 25 years, Barred and Short-eared owls 16 years each, and Great Horned Owl only 12 years.

Hawks have also shown some changes in their abundance. The first Bald Eagle on an Iowa CBC was in 1925 (Davenport), and eagles were seen on only four CBCs in the period covered here, very different from the present situation where this is the most abundant or second most abundant raptor on Iowa's CBCs in most years. Even hawks that we consider common now were often missed on these early CBCs. Over the 32 years considered here, Red-tailed Hawk was found 20 years, Rough-legged Hawk 16 years, American Kestrel 14 years, Northern Harrier 13 years, and Red-shouldered Hawk 12 years. The first four of those species are presently found every year and the first three are found on most counts every year. In contrast, the relative abundance of the Red-shouldered Hawk in the past suggests that that species was more abundant then than it is now.

Some of the birds of open country often were missed on these early CBCs. Snow Buntings were found only two years (1911 and 1934) and Snowy Owl only one (1909). Even Horned Lark was missed 10 of 32 years. Although these are easy species to miss, they certainly are more commonly reported on CBCs in recent years. Perhaps their rarity then relates to the greater difficulty of traveling in rural areas. One has to remember that the earliest of these counts were held in an era that was largely without automobiles. Snow Bunting and Snowy Owl are most commonly found while driving rural roads. Thus it is perhaps more a marvel that they were found at all in those early years. Several of the compilers commented that Snow Buntings had been seen in their area but could not be found on the count day, a frustration of modern-day compilers as well.

Even for those birders fortunate enough to have an automobile, the road system, especially in rural areas, was less extensive than it is today. Many of those roads were poorly maintained in winter, and many good birding areas were difficult to reach. Even urban birders didn't always use cars. Back issues of the Des Moines Audubon Society newsletter, The Redstart, indicate that Des Moines birders did much of their birding at sites that were accessible by streetcar.

Several fruit eating birds are seen more often now than in the past. Perhaps the increase in junipers on abandoned farms and fruit bearing trees and shrubs in urban areas is providing more food now than was available in the past. American Robins were reported only 13 of the 32 years and Eastern Bluebird only 7 of 32 years; both of these species are reported virtually every year now. On these old counts, Bohemian Waxwings were reported almost as many years as Cedar Waxwings (3 vs 4). In recent years Cedar Waxwings have been seen almost yearly while Bohemian Waxwings are rare.

Count totals from these early counts are smaller in comparison with today's totals in part because of the treatment of four introduced species. House Sparrows were found statewide by 1900 but most counters shunned counting them. European Starlings first reached Iowa in 1922 and were found statewide by 1936 (DuMont 1945). Starlings were reported regularly on CBCs only from 1934-36. Rock Doves were considered a domestic species and were not reported on any of these CBCs. Ring-necked Pheasants first were reported on a CBC in 1919 (Emmetsburg) and were found almost yearly after 1922 but mainly in northern Iowa. Presently, these four species are found on almost all Iowa CBCs every year. The recent invasion of House Finches across Iowa has added another species to most Iowa CBCs in the last few years.

Who were the people who made these counts? The lists of the people involved in these early CBCs reads like a roster of the founders, early officers, and active members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. I noted the names of 14 of the founders of the I.O.U. and at least 19 people who served as an officer or on the board of directors. I also noted three individuals who are still alive. Philip DuMont of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, took part in several of the Des Moines counts from 1923-1934, John Bliese of Kearney, Nebraska participated in the 1934 Cedar Falls count, and Bob Stewart of Jamestown, North Dakota was on the 1930 Des Moines count.

SUMMARY

From 1903-1936, 170 Christmas Bird Counts were held in Iowa. These early CBCs involved fewer observers and found fewer species than recent counts. Although most of the common Iowa winter birds were found on these counts, a number of species show changes in their reporting rates from what is found at present. These early counts provide a fascinating view of Iowa winter birds early in this century.

I appreciate the comments of Ross Silcock and Hank Zaletel on an earlier draft of this paper.

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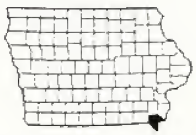
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BIRDING THE CROTON UNIT OF SHIMEK STATE FOREST

BOB CECIL



The Croton Unit is one of the largest contiguous segments of the Shimek State Forest, comprising some 1,000 acres. Located along the Des Moines River in southern Lee County, it has become well known as a reliable location for a number of species typically associated with the southeastern United States. In recent years, 12 warbler species have nested or been suspected of nesting in the area, and at least 10 nest annually. In addition, the area is noted for vireos, both tanagers, and other woodland species.

While birding the area has its rewards, it also presents challenges. Ticks are abundant, and birders are strongly encouraged to use repellant and wear tall rubber boots. To date, no Lyme Disease transmitting deer ticks have been found in the immediate area, but they have been found nearby. Chiggers can be abundant in summer but can also be controlled with repellant. Poison ivy is also abundant. Birders who are sensitive to the plant are encouraged to know the leaf and to avoid it. All Shimek Forest units are public hunting areas, but this should be of little problem during spring and summer outings. Wild Turkey hunters may be present well into spring, but are rarely encountered. Finally, the area is undeveloped. Trails are not routinely maintained, there are no bridges across the small streams (another reason to wear rubber boots), and there are no restroom or picnic facilities.

To get to the area, start at the unincorporated community of Argyle, located about 7.5 miles south of Donnellson on Iowa highway 394. Go west at the post office--the town's only intersection. After about 2 miles, the road will fork. Bear right. The road winds past some houses and through a junkyard (location 1 on Figure 1). Bewick's Wren has been found at this junkyard in recent years. Do not enter the junkyard. If Bewick's Wrens are present, their Song Sparrow-like song usually can be heard from the road. After leaving the junkyard area, continue on a short distance to the Shimek Forest sign on the right. Just past the sign is a pull off (2). The upland brushy area to the left is excellent for Blue-winged Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Unfortunately, conifers that have been planted in the area are rapidly transforming the habitat. A trail circles this field, and others lead further into the woods towards the Des Moines River.

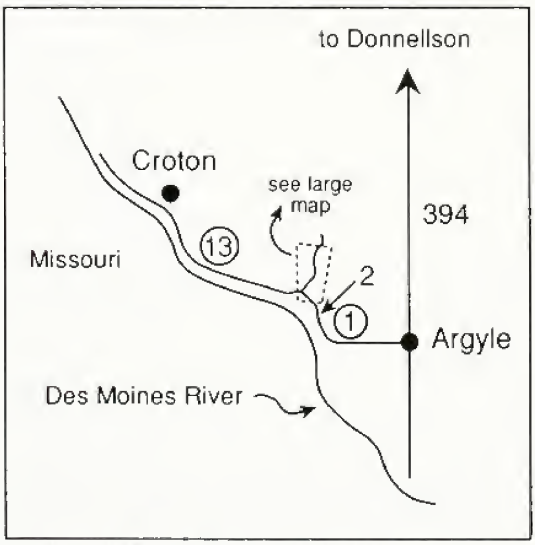


Fig. 1. Locator map of the Croton Unit, Shimek State Forest, Lee County.

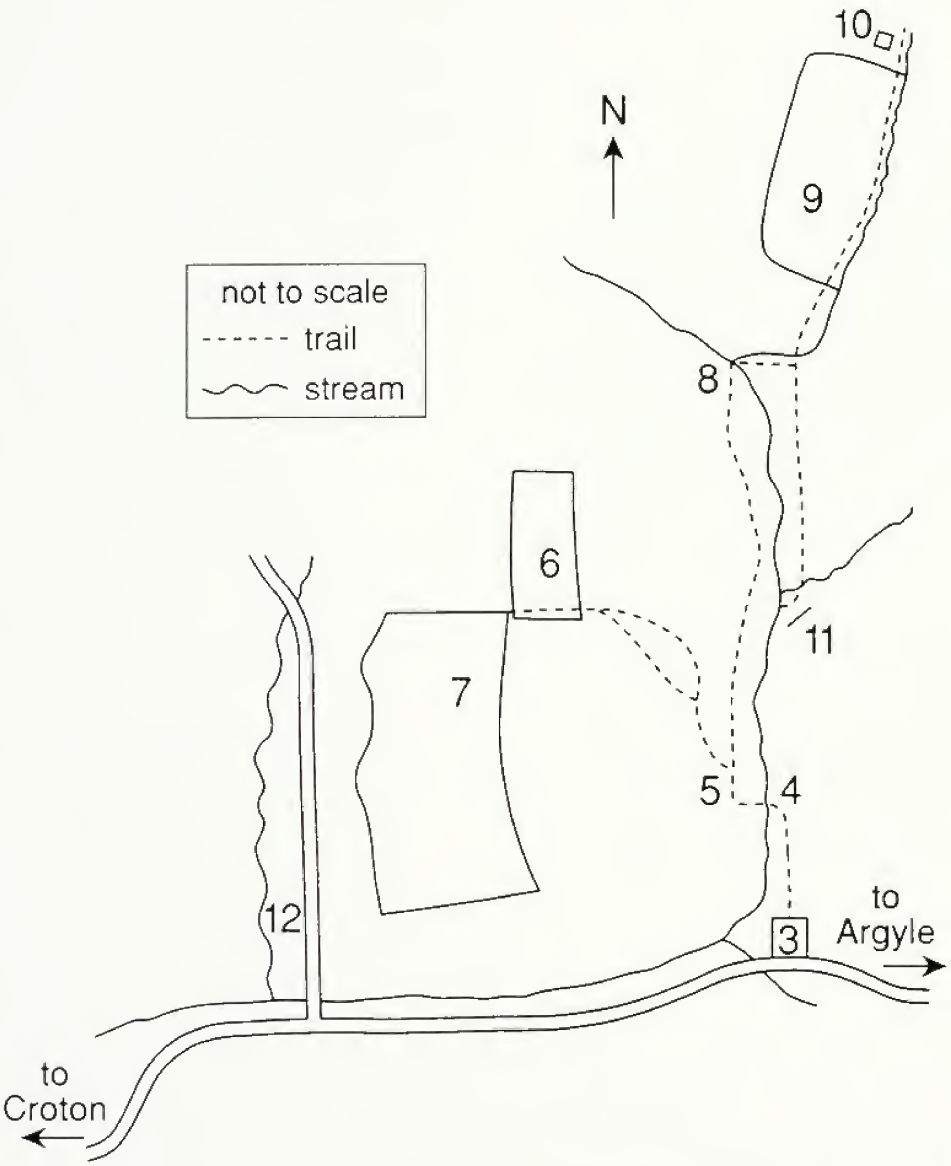


Fig. 2. Birding areas on the Croton Unit, Shimek State Forest.

After birding the upland brush area, return to your car and proceed on down the hill, listening for Northern Parula and Cerulean Warbler as you re-enter the woodland. At the bottom of the hill just before a small bridge is a small graveled parking lot (see area 3 on Figure 2). Park here and listen for Hooded Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Carolina Wren, and Worm-eating Warbler. The Worm-eating Warbler sounds like a Chipping Sparrow at close range, but in the distance, sounds more like a soft monotonous hiss emanating from the woods. From the parking lot, follow the path into the woods. After a short distance, the path will turn left and cross a small stream (4). Louisiana Waterthrush may be found anywhere along this stream. Listen for their piercing song. Winter Wrens are also frequently encountered here during their migration. You may wish to search here for the Iowa endangered Orange-throated Darter, a small fish that swims in short, rapid bursts and then rests motionless on the stream bottom. After crossing the stream and turning right, you will come to an old overgrown field. Blue-winged Warbler and White-eyed Vireo may be found here, and Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Wood Thrush should be heard singing from the nearby woods. At the overgrown pasture, there is a fork in the trail (5). The path to the left will take you towards two old roads leading up a long hill. Following either of these eventually will take you up to two more old fields (6, 7), also planted in conifers. These areas are good for Field Sparrow, Blue-winged Warbler, and may have Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed Vireo, and others. Prairie Warbler has been found in these locations both during the nesting season and migration, but you should not expect to always find this species here.

Return to the trail fork (5). The trail to the right will take you along the stream, where Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are abundant, and other species such as Scarlet Tanager should be found. This trail parallels the stream for about 0.25 miles and then ends at the stream bank (8). If you wish to continue your exploration, turn right, cross the stream, and cut through the woods about 100 feet to another trail following the hillside. This trail was once an old road, but is now largely overgrown. Following this to the left will lead you to yet another old pasture bordering the stream (9). While you may encounter other trails leading up the hill to the left, stay on the trail following the stream. Past the old field, and to the left of the trail, you will see an old stone building amid the trees (10). Sometimes this is difficult to see through the foliate, but its primitive construction make it worth the search.

You may follow the trail back along the stream all the way to a large dirt wash (11). Listen here for Northern Parula and Cerulean Warbler in the cottonwoods and sycamores. From here, you may cross the stream and return to the first trail, or follow the stream. Either choice can involve some difficult walking and climbing. Both choices will take you back to where you first crossed the stream.

Note: People new to this woodland are often concerned about getting lost. The simple rule of thumb is to a follow a stream downstream. All streams ultimately lead back either to location 4, or if you should strike out cross country, to location 12.

After birding this area, you may wish to continue on down the road to where a road goes off to the right. At the intersection, and along to the road going right (north) are large cottonwoods and sycamores which harbor Northern Parula, Cerulean Warbler, and sometimes, Yellow-throated Warbler (12). Following this road a little farther will lead to farmland. Watch the fences and lines for Lark Sparrow, and occasionally, Blue Grosbeak. Farther along the road you will find more sycamores on private property.

In you go on straight, you will wind up following the Des Moines River. Each year, small numbers of the eastern race of Blue Grosbeak are found along this road

(13). They may be anywhere along the road, including near the Turkey Run Access, about 1.5 miles past the intersection. If you continue along this road, you will come to the tiny community of Croton (whose claim to fame is the site of the most northerly battle of the Civil War), and on to Farmington.

While birding Shimek Forest, please refrain from playing taped songs. Many of these species are rare Iowa birds at the extreme edge of their range, and are experiencing severe cowbird nest parasitism. They should be allowed to carry out their nesting attempts in all possible tranquility.

The Croton Unit comprises only abut 1,000 acres of the 7,000 total acres of Shimek State Forest. Many of the other units also offer high quality habitat which could be searched for the species noted above. State forest maps are available at the Shimek State Forest headquarters in Donnellson. Another interesting nearby birding area is Lacey-Keosauqua State Park which was described in *Iowa Bird Life* 56:6-8. To reach it continue north from Croton along the Des Moines River to highway 2 and then west 14 miles to the park.

1315 41st St., Des Moines, IA 50311



Dr. Myrle Burke

IN MEMORIAM: DR. MYRLE BURK

HANK ZALETEL

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union's (I.O.U.) oldest life member died recently. Dr. Myrle Marie Juliana Burk, 93, of Bartels Lutheran Home, Waverly, formerly of Waterloo, died at the home on Monday, 30 March 1992 of natural causes.

She was born 13 May 1898 in Bennington Township, Black Hawk County, the daughter of George and August Fritz Burk. Dr. Burk received a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Iowa State Teachers College in 1928. The next September she enrolled as a graduate student in the Botany Department at the University of Nebraska. Her thesis title was "The flowering plants of Black Hawk County, Iowa."

She said: "it was quite a chore but I was determined to find and identify every plant I could in this county. I think I walked from one end of the county to the other along the highways picking every plant I could. I ended up identifying over 500 species but didn't come close to finding all of them." She received her Masters Degree in June 1930. Four years later she received a doctorate for her studies in mycology (the study of fungi) from the University of Illinois.

As she was completing her doctorate in 1934, her father became ill and Burk returned to Black Hawk County to help in the family farming operation. Burk and her sister operated the farm for many years.

Dr. Burk joined the I.O.U. in 1949 and served as Secretary-Treasurer of our organization from June 1956 to May 1968. Upon her retirement from the Executive Council the Secretary-Treasurer post was divided into two separate positions. As a former Treasurer of this organization, I can attest to the amount of work this job entails. To hold the Treasurer's job for more than 12 years is remarkable

As Secretary, she wrote more than 20 summaries of spring and fall meetings in addition to reports on bird sightings and site locations. Even in her advanced age, she was dedicated to our organization becoming a life member within the past 10 years.

On the local scene she was an active member of the Waterloo Audubon Society serving as President, field trip leader, and Christmas Bird Count compiler.

In 1954 she joined The Nature Conservancy playing an active role in the organization culminating with her acceptance as chairperson of the state board of trustees for the 1969-70 year. In 1978, she was awarded The Nature Conservancy's Oak Leaf Award for volunteerism, the highest award of the national organization.

Her rural existence, her love for the land with its flora and fauna, and her education, formed a woman with a strong desire to protect the environment. Her legacy, which is quite formidable, has been further enhanced by the fact that she left an estimated $200,000 to the Iowa Nature Conservancy. According to Gary Reiners, state director, this was one of the largest gifts ever received from an individual.

Burk, who was unmarried, has no immediate survivors.

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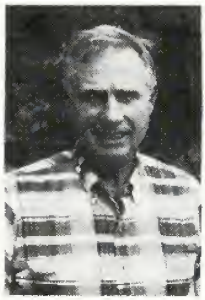
FIELD REPORTS--FALL 1992

THOMAS H. KENT, JAMES L. FULLER, AND CARL J. BENDORF

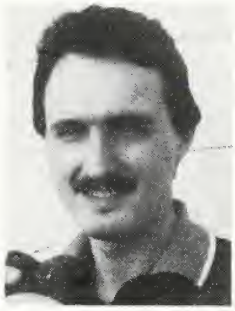
WEATHER



Tom Kent



Jim Fuller



Carl Bendorf

August was the second coolest overall in 120 years following a very cool summer. Low temperatures in the forties were much more common than high temperatures in the nineties. Only northwestern Iowa had rainfall at or above normal levels.

September was the sixth consecutive cooler-than-normal month. Rainfall varied greatly across the state; much of the northwest was quite dry while south-central Iowa experienced record flooding, especially from storms on the 14th-15th.October continued the cool weather trend but was otherwise relatively uneventful. The only precipitation of note was limited to west-central and northwestern counties where a stalled cold front created thundershowers on the 6th-8th. Scattered snow flurries were widespread on the 16th and up to two inches fell in northeastern Iowa on the 19th.

November was remarkable for persistent and widespread rain or overcast conditions. Three major storm systems delivered precipitation across the state on the 1st, 19th-20th, and 25th. The last storm dropped up to nine inches of snow in a narrow band from southwestern Iowa to the northeast into Wisconsin.

Table 1. Precipitation and Temperature with Deviation from Normal.

	Temperature, F		Precipitation inches	
	Mean	(Deviation)	Mean	(Deviation)
August	66.1	(-6.0)	2.56	(-1.54)
September	61.7	(-1.8)	5.53	(+2.11)
October	51.4	(-1.3)	1.63	(-0.67)
November	33.8	(-3.4)	4.42	(+2.91)

GENERAL TRENDS

Water levels were up at the four major reservoirs, partly due to rain and partly due to permanent raising of the pool level at several of the reservoirs; this resulted in loss of some favorite shorebird habitat. On the other hand, high water at Rathbun Reservoir produced some edge where shorebirds lingered late into November. The warbler migration was at least average with a number of reporters spending considerable time in the field observing them. Beth Proescholdt at Grammer Grove in central Iowa and Babs and Loren Padelford at Hitchcock Nature Area in western Iowa extensively monitored the hawk migration. Only the highlights are included here. We hope that in a few years they will be able to publish a more detailed account of their

findings. The waterfowl migration was late and not very impressive, perhaps due to birds moving south in small numbers with a series of cold fronts. Winter finches were scarce, but a few Snowy Owls showed up.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

The rarest bird was a Western Flycatcher that was not identified to species (Cordilleran vs. Pacific-slope), which would be the third record east of the Missouri River. Also rare were Lewis's Woodpecker and Vermilion Flycatcher, which will be third state records. Other accidental species were a Laughing Gull lingering from the Summer Season and a Red Phalarope. Casual species included Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Red Knot, Thayer's Gull, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

SPECIES DATA

(* = documented), [] = record dates

Red-throated Loon: 1 was found on the IOU field trip at Red Rock Res. on 7 Nov and was present at least until the 9th (*DCP, *AMJ, *MPr, *THK, *RLC, *JLF) [2nd earliest].

Pacific Loon: 1 was found at the same location as the Red-throated Loon on 8 Nov and was still there on the 9th (*JLF, *THK).

Common Loon: 2 were first at Pleasant Creek L. on 14 Oct (JDu). The high count was 62 at Red Rock Res. on 11 Nov (MPr). The last was at Maffitt Res. on 29 Nov (BE).

Pied-billed Grebe: 10 young birds were at Silver L. in Worth Co. on 13 Aug (THK).

Horned Grebe: The first was at Trumbull L. on 9 Oct (MMB). The high count was 10 at L. Manawa on 29 Oct (BKP/LJP). On 29 Nov there were still 3 at Pleasant Creek L. (JDu). Up to 3 were seen at eight other locations.

Red-necked Grebe: 1 was at Pool 9 in Allamakee Co. on 14 Nov (Francis Moore fide THK).

Eared Grebe: Reports were of 1 at Grover L. in Dickinson Co. on 22 Aug (LAS), 1 at Lower Twin L. on 16 Oct (PCP), 2 at Rathbun Res. on 5 and 8 Nov (TNJ, RLC, THK), 1 at Stolley P. in Clay Co. on 8 Nov (LAS), and 1 at Crawford Creek R.A. on 14 Nov (PE).

Western Grebe: 1 was still at Silver L. in Worth Co. on 13 Aug (THK). Other reports were 2 at Trumbull L. on 11 Sep and 1 there on 29 Oct (MMB), 1 at Rock Creek S.P. on 8 Nov (MPr), and 2 at Saylorville Res. on 14 Nov (BE).

American White Pelican: 25 were at Huron Is. in Des Moines Co. in SE Iowa by 4 Aug (PCP). The high count was 2,035 at Saylorville Res. on 15 Aug (BE). Singles were still in Woodbury Co. on 26 Nov (BFH) and Rathbun Res. on 28 Nov (RLC).

Double-crested Cormorant: High counts included 948 at Hitchcock Nature A. in Pottawattamie Co. on 3 Oct (BKP/LJP), 644 at Saylorville Res. on 10 Oct (BE), and 500 at Coralville Res. on 4 Oct (DRP).

American Bittern: Singles were at Silver L. in Dickinson Co. on 4 Sep (DCH), at Cedar L. on 1 Oct (JLF), and Rathbun Res. on 18 Oct (RLC).

Least Bittern: Singles were at Casey Barrow Access in Des Moines Co. on 16 and 19 Aug (DRP, JLF) and w. of Spirit L. on 22 Aug (LAS, JJD).

Great Blue Heron: The high count reported was 50 at Coralville Res. (JDu), which is down from recent years.

Great Egret: The high counts were 50 at Coralville Res. on 30 Aug (JDu), 41 at Patterson W.A. in Kossuth Co. on 16 Aug (MCK), and 22 at Saylorville Res. on 21 Aug (PA/RA). On 21 Nov, 1 was at Credit Is. (THK) [2nd latest].

Little Blue Heron: An imm. was at Kettleson-Hogsback A. on 26 Sep (*LAS) [3rd latest].

Cattle Egret: The only report was of 1 at Bays Branch on 31 Oct (THK).

Green-backed Heron: The last at Moorehead P. in Ida Co. was on 8 Oct (PE).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Reports were from Trumbull L. (8) on 7 Sep (LAS), Saylorville Res. (up to 5) on 7-27 Sep (BE, MPr, AMJ, JDu), Mallard M. in Cerro Gordo Co. (1) on 30 Sep (JLW), and Rathbun Res. (1) on 11 Oct (RLC).

Ibis species: 1 imm. was at Runnells A. on 4 Oct (JSi-details) [3rd latest].

Tundra Swan: 400 were at the usual location at Pool 9 by 14 Nov (DeC). The only others were 2 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 17 Nov (MCK).

Greater White-fronted Goose: All reports were from the same day: 17 Oct, with 500 at Bays Branch (THK), 154 at Saylorville Res. (BE), 22 at Red Rock Res. (JSi), and 19 at Mud L. in Clay Co. (LAS).

Snow Goose: 540,000 were at DeSoto N.W.R. on 27 Nov (TEB).

Ross's Goose: 1 was reported from Guthrie Co. on 27 Nov (RLC).

Green-winged Teal: The first was at Coralville Res. on 29 Aug (DRP).

American Black Duck: Singles were seen on 8 Nov in Clay Co. (MMB) and Red Rock Res. (BFH). At a more usual location, 5 were at Pool 9 on 22 Nov (JDu).

Mallard: The peak of 3,000 at Saylorville Res. was considered low (BE).

Northern Shoveler: Lingering birds included 30 at Pool 9 on 22 Nov (JDu) and 1 at Pleasant Creek L. on 26 Nov (JDu).

Greater Scaup: 1 female was reported at Pleasant Creek L. on 27 Nov (THK-details).

Lesser Scaup: 1,500 were at L. Manawa on 26 Oct (BKP/LJP).

Oldsquaw: 3 were at Pleasant Creek L. on 26-27 Nov (JDu, THK).

Black Scoter: Single females or immatures were at Pleasant Creek L. on 24-28 Oct (*JLF, *THK-photo, *DRP) and the Iowa Public Television Station pond in Johnston on 19-21 Nov (BE, AMJ).

Surf Scoter: Up to 3 were at IPL Ponds and L. Manawa on 28-31 Oct (BKP/LJP, THK).

White-winged Scoter: 1 male was at Pleasant Creek L. on 5 Nov (THK, JLF) and 2 birds were there on 7 Nov (JDu); 2 more were at Red Rock Res. on 11 Nov (MPr).

Common Goldeneye: The first was at Coralville Res. on 5 Nov (JLF).

Bufflehead: 9 were still at L. Manawa on 27 Nov (TEB).

Hooded Merganser: High counts included 100 at Coralville Res. on 5 Nov (THK), 62 at Red Rock Res. on 8 Nov (BFH, beating out the exact count of 60 by Diane Porter and Ann Johnson on the 7th), 58 at Saylorville Res. on 7 Nov (BE), and 52 at L. Manawa on 9 Nov (TEB). One lingered at Rock Valley in NW Iowa to 27 Nov (JV).

Common Merganser: 1,800 were at Saylorville Res. on 29 Nov (BE).

Ruddy Duck: The last was at Pleasant Creek L. on 29 Nov (JDu).

Turkey Vulture: The peak migration at Hitchcock Nature A. was 30 on 17 Sep (BKP/LJP). At Fairfield, the last was seen on 11 Oct (DCP).

Osprey: Many were reported from across the state, with the first on 1 Aug at Dudgeon L. (JDu), the peak of 10 at Effigy Mounds N.M. on 13 Sep (DeC), and the last at Rock Creek S.P. on 11 Nov (MPr). The others were seen from 13 Aug to 13 Oct.

Bald Eagle: Many were reported throughout the period with peak of 51 at Pool 9 on 22 Nov (JDu).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The first was in Cerro Gordo Co. on 10 Aug (RG). Peak counts were 88 at Grammer Grove on 27 Sep (BPr) and 38 at Hitchcock Nature A. on 5 Oct (BKP/LJP).

Cooper's Hawk: A family group of 4 was at Call S.P. on 2 Aug (MCK). Peak counts were 8 at Hitchcock Nature A. on 17 Sep (BKP/LJP), 45 at Grammer Grove on 27 Sep (BPr), and 5 at Iowa City on 3 Oct (DRP).

Northern Goshawk: Reports included 1 imm. on 3 Oct in Iowa City (*DRP), 1 on 4 Oct at Norwalk (AMJ), 1 ad. on 8 Nov at Rathbun Res. (THK), 1 injured bird on 24 Nov in Bremer Co. (DSi), and 1 on 28-30 Nov in Marion (JDu).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Singles were sighted at Mark Twain N.W.R. in Louisa Co. on 19 and 28 Aug (PCP), Noble's Is. in Allamakee Co. on 11 Sep (MPr), Hitchcock Nature A. on 15 and 22 Sep (BKP/LJP), Algona on 22 Sep (MCK), and Stone P. on 21 Oct (Jerry Probst fide BFH).

Broad-winged Hawk: On 22 Aug, an imm. was at Call S.P. (MCK) and 2 birds were in Iowa City (DRP). Another imm. was in Des Moines Co. on 27 Aug (JLF, THK). Peak counts at Grammer Grove were 189 on 19 Sep, 85 on 22 Sep, and 75 on 27 Sep (BPr). Peaks in W Iowa were much lower with 6 at Hitchcock Nature A. on 21 Sep (BKP/LJP) and 5 in Lyon Co. on 27 Sep (DCH).

Swainson's Hawk: 2 were w. of Union in Hardin Co. on 15 Sep (MPr). Large numbers were seen in W Iowa with a peak of 163 at Hitchcock Nature A. on 27 Sep (BKP/LJP) and 28 in three kettles on the same day in S Clay Co. (LAS).

Red-tailed Hawk: 3 each of Krider's and Harlan's hawks were reported. Migration peaks were 91 on 22 Sep at Grammer Grove (BPr) and 36 on 10 Oct at Hitchcock Nature A. (BKP/LJP).

Rough-legged Hawk: The first was from 11 Oct in Warren Co. (AMJ).

Golden Eagle: In addition to birds at the usual wintering location in Allamakee Co., unusual numbers of migrants were reported as follows: 5 (4 adults) at Grammer Grove -- 2 on 27 Sep [3rd earliest], 1 on 20 Oct, and 2 on 28 Oct (BPr); single immatures at Hitchcock Nature A. on 28 Sep, 11 Oct, and 12 Oct (BKP/LJP-details); 1 imm. and 1 ad. sw of Peterson in Buena Vista Co. on 13 Oct and 11 Nov, respectively (MMB); and 1 ad. in N Polk Co. on 18 Nov (BPr).

American Kestrel: The peak at Hitchcock Nature A. was 10 on 17 Sep (BKP/LJP).
Merlin: Reports were from Union Slough N.W.R. on 20 Aug (MCK) [record earliest]; Hitchcock Nature A. on 10 Sep (2), 25 Sep, and 9 Oct (BKP/LJP); Iowa City on 3 Oct (DRP); and Grammer Grove on 10 Oct (BPr).
Peregrine Falcon: 2 were in downtown Ames on 1 Aug (*WO). The last was at Ida Grove on 21 Nov (PE). Singles were seen at eight other locations from 27 Aug to 2 Oct.
Prairie Falcon: Singles were s. of Cherokee on 19 Sep (*DBi) and nw. of Spencer on 29 Nov (*LAS).
Gray Partridge: 2 were in SE Louisa Co. on 16 Aug (DRP).
Ruffed Grouse: 2 were drumming at Yellow River F. on 12 Sep (DCP, MPr).
Yellow Rail: Singles were flushed at Snake Creek M. on 19, 20, and 26 Sep (m.ob.)
King Rail: 5 were at Casey Barrow Access on 16 Aug (*JES, DRP-sketch), and 1 was there on 22 Aug (JLF).
Virginia Rail: 2 were at Otter Creek M. on 14 Aug (JDu).
Sora: 1 was at Saylorville Res. on 27 Sep (JDu).
Common Moorhen: 5 were at Fin and Feather L. s. of Mason City on 7 Oct (CJF, JLW).
American Coot: The peak at Saylorville Res. was 3,250 on 17 Oct (BE).
Sandhill Crane: 1 was still at Otter Creek M. on 1 Aug (AMJ).
Black-bellied Plover: The first was at Casey Barrow Access on 16 Aug (DRP). The last was at Rathbun Res. on 28 Nov (*TNJ)[record latest]. Up to 5 were reported from Coralville and Saylorville reservoirs and L. Darling.
Lesser Golden-Plover: 1 was in Kossuth Co. on 1 Aug (MCK). The larger flocks included 20 in NE Des Moines Co. on 27 Aug (THK), 105 nw. of Davenport on 21 Sep (PCP), 21 at Odebolt on 22 Sep (PE), and 44 in Harrison Co. on 15 Oct (BKP/LJP). Singles were late at Spring L. in Cherokee Co. on 15 Nov (DBi), in NE Des Moines Co. on 20 Nov (THK), and at the Port Neal plant in Woodbury Co. on 22 Nov (BFH)[tles 2nd latest].
Semipalmated Plover: The last was at Saylorville Res. on 18 Oct (THK).
Piping Plover: 1 was at Saylorville Res. on 21 Aug (BE), and 2 were there on 26 Aug (AMJ).
Killdeer: The last was seen at Rathbun Res. on 22 Nov (TNJ).
American Avocet: Reports included 3 on 1 Aug at Saylorville Res. (MPr), 3 on 15 Sep at Pleasant Creek L. (JDu), and 11 on 8 Oct at Rathbun Res. (CS).
Greater Yellowlegs: The last were 3 at Palo on 3 Nov (THK).
Lesser Yellowlegs: The last was at Rathbun Res. on 8 Nov (THK).
Solitary Sandpiper: The last was at Pleasant Creek L. on 1 Sep (JDu).
Spotted Sandpiper: The last was in Cerro Gordo Co. on 7 Oct (CJF).
Ruddy Turnstone: Reports included 1 on 19 Aug at Casey Barrow Access (JLF), 3 on 29 Aug at Red Rock Res. (MPr), and 1 on 11 Oct at Saylorville Res. (AMJ)[record latest].
Red Knot: 4 were at Rathbun Res. on 4 Oct (*CS, *TNJ, *RLC)[record latest].
Sanderling: At Saylorville Res., the first was on 2 Aug (BE), the peak of 14 was on 7 Sep (AMJ), and the last 4 were on 23 Oct (AMJ). Others were 6 at Casey Barrow Access on 7 Sep (THK), 6 at Red Rock Res. on 27 Sep (DRP), 1 at L. Manawa on 28 Sep (BKP/LJP), and 1 at Rathbun Res. on 27 Oct (TNJ).
Western Sandpiper: 2 were at Coralville Res. on 22 Aug (*THK).
Least Sandpiper: The last were 6 at Coralville Res. on 20 Oct (THK).
Baird's Sandpiper: The peak was 9 at Saylorville Res. on 13 Oct (AMJ). The last were singles at Saylorville Res. on 16 Nov (BE) and at Rathbun Res. on 24 Nov (*TNJ)[2nd latest].
Pectoral Sandpiper: The peak was 235 at Saylorville Res. on 21 Aug (BE). The last were 2 at Rathbun Res. on 19 Nov (TNJ) and 2 at Cherokee on 20 Nov (DBi).
Dunlin: The first were 6 at Coralville Res. on 20 Oct (THK). The last were 6 at Rathbun Res. on 20 Nov (TNJ).
Stilt Sandpiper: 30 were at Saylorville Res. on 6 Sep (BE), and the last 1 was there on 19 Sep (JLF, THK).
Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Reports included 2 at Saylorville Res. on 2 Aug (BE) and 1 there on 29 Aug (PA/RA), 1 at IPL Ponds on 5 Sep (BKP/LJP), and 6 on a sod farm nw. of Davenport on 16 Sep (PCP).
Short-billed Dowitcher: 1 was at Zirbel Sl. on 3 Aug (RG), and 1 in basic plumage called "tu-tu-tu" at Crawford Creek R.A. in Ida Co. on 4 Sep (PE)..
Long-billed Dowitcher: 1 s. of Cherokee on 11 Nov (MMB) is presumed to be of this species because of the date.
Common Snipe: The peak count at Rathbun Res. was 31 on 11 Oct (RLC).
American Woodcock: 1 was at Rathbun Res. on 22 Nov (TNJ).
Red Phalarope: 1 was at Rathbun Res. on 8-9 Nov (*THK-photos, *RLC, TNJ-photos, *JLF).

Laughing Gull: The juvenile seen during the Summer Season was still at Red Rock Res. on 1 Aug (*MPr).

Franklin's Gull: The highest count was 10,000 at Saylorville Res. on 3 Oct (BE). On 17 Oct, 2,000 were still in the Storm L. area (THK). More unusual were 500 in E Iowa at Credit Is. on 3 Nov (Cory Blevins fide PCP).

Bonaparte's Gull: The first were at Saylorville Res. on 3 Oct (BE). The high count was 225 at Rathbun Res. on 2 Nov (TNJ), and the last 2 were there on 28 Nov (RLC).

Ring-billed Gull: 50 imm. summered at Saylorville Res. (BE). About 10,000 were estimated at Red Rock Res. on 7 Nov (RLC, THK).

Herring Gull: The first was at Saylorville Res. on 17 Oct (BE).

Thayer's Gull: 1 ad. was at Red Rock Res. on 9 Nov (*JLF)[3rd earliest].

Caspian Tern: The first were 2 at Casey Barrow Access on 16 Aug (DRP). The high count was 85 at Coralville Res. on 3 Sep (THK). The last was at L. Manawa on 21 Sep (BKP/LJP).

Forster's Tern: 122 were at L. Manawa on 2 Aug, a high count for that location (BKP/LJP). The last was at Coralville Res. on 22 Sep (DRP).

Least Tern: 1 ad. was at Saylorville Res. on 1 Aug (MPr).

Black Tern: The high count was 25 at Casey Barrow Access on 25 Aug (THK). The last 2 were at L. Manawa on 5 Sep (BKP/LJP).

Black-billed Cuckoo: 1 or 2 were reported from six locations from 1 Aug to 30 Sep. Another was last in Warren Co. on 10 Oct (JSi).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 1-4 were reported from six locations up to 4 Sep. The last was in Linn Co. on 11 Sep (DLD).

Great Horned Owl: An arctic-race bird was at Algona on 29 Nov (MCK).

Snowy Owl: Reports included 1 from Cerro Gordo Co. on 10 Oct (Denny Becker fide RG)[3rd earliest], an injured bird in Bremer Co. on 5 Nov (DSi), and a dead bird in Story Co. on 6 Nov (found by Ken Wiggers fide JJD).

Burrowing Owl: 1 was found dead on the grill of a local car in Pocahontas on 10 Sep (Stacey Newbrough fide JJD). Head bobbing was described for one n. of Colo in Story Co. on 11 Sep (Joe Kooiker fide JJD).

Long-eared Owl: The only report was of 2 at Badger Creek P. on 29 Nov (AMJ).

Short-eared Owl: Singles were reported from W Ida Co. on 3 Oct (PE), Hardin Co. on 16 Oct (THK), and Boone Co. on 21 Nov (MPr).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Singles were reported from Mason City on 10 Nov (RG, JLW), L. Ahquabi SP on 15 Nov (AMJ, JLF, THK), and Moorehead P. in Ida Co. on 21 Nov (PE).

Common Nighthawk: Migrating flocks included 25 in Iowa City on 26 Aug (THK), 70 in Algona on 27 Aug (MCK), 120 in Linn Co. on 6 Sep (DLD), and 9 in Atlantic on 12 Sep (MAP). The last was in West Des Moines on 7 Oct (PA/RA).

Chimney Swift: After 40 years, the chimney at Fairfield High School, where hundreds of swifts congregated in the fall, was blocked, and the high count was only 7 on 24 Aug (DCP).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: There were four reports from October, the last on the 8th in West Des Moines (PA/RA). Much later was an imm. male on 1 Nov in Sioux City (Mike McKenzie fide BFH).

Lewis's Woodpecker: On 14 Oct, Marion Brewer and Vernon Bierman found Iowa's 3rd Lewis's Woodpecker in rural Cherokee Co. north of Washta, and Marion provided information that helped many observers see the bird until the 18th (*MMB, *DBi, *PCP, *THK-photo, *MPr).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: There were seven reports from September, with the first at Effigy Mounds N.M. on the 13th (DCP).

Northern Flicker: Reports of red-shafted birds were from Cerro Gordo (Lowell Washburn fide JJD), Pottawattamie (BKP/LJP), and Cherokee (MMB) counties.

Pileated Woodpecker: 1 was in Marshalltown on 11 and 13 Aug (Betty Savage fide MPr).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: A large number of single birds were reported as migrants, with the first on 2 Aug at Coralville Res. (JDu), and the last on 22 Sep in Pottawattamie Co. (BKP/LJP).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: 16 were in Winneshiek Co. on 14 Aug (DeC), and 2 were still singing in Sioux Co. on 25 Sep (JV).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: The first was at Grammer Grove on 14 Aug (MPr), and the last was at Yellow River F. on 12 Sep (MPr).

Western Flycatcher: A potential first state record found by Ann Johnson and Beth Brown was at L. Ahquabi S.P. on 14-15 Nov. It was not identified as species (Pacific-slope or Cordilleran)(*AMJ-photos, *THK-photo, *JLF-photo).

Vermilion Flycatcher: A female, which would represent a 3rd state record, was discovered by Jim Sinclair, and seen well by m.ob. at Rathbun Res. on 25 Oct (*JiS, *RLC, *TNJ, *JLF, *THK-photo, PA/RA-photo).

Great Crested Flycatcher: 1 on 3 Oct at Hitchcock Nature A. was late (BKP/LJP)[2nd latest].

Western Kingbird: Single birds seen away from their normal range in the Missouri R. Valley were in Polk Co. on 30 Aug (PA/RA) and Cherokee Co. on 31 Aug (MMB).

Eastern Kingbird: 35 were counted at Forney L. on 5 Sep (TEB).

Tree Swallow: Flocks of 250-600 individuals gathered in Fremont and Pottawattamie counties from 12 Aug to 5 Sep (BKP/LJP, RLC, TEB). The big news were the unprecedented birds in late November, when this species was reported from three reservoir locations by a number of observers. The last 3 observations, all late records, were 24 Nov at Rathbun Res. (*TNJ)[record latest], 17 Nov at Coralville Res. (JLF)[2nd latest], and 15 Nov near Red Rock Res. (JLF, THK)[3rd latest].

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: A flock of 250 was in Cerro Gordo Co. on 14 Aug (CJF).

Bank Swallow: 500 were in Cerro Gordo Co. on 12 Aug (CJF).

Barn Swallow: An albino was at Fairfield on 24 Aug (DCP). The last were 10 on 30 Oct at DeSoto N.W.R. (BKP/LJP).

Blue Jay: A total of 3,027 passed by Hitchcock Nature A. in the Loess Hills from 13 Sep to 22 Oct (BKP/LJP). In just a half hour, 410 were counted at Union Slough N.W.R. on 20 Sep (MCK), and a flock of 50 was in Sioux Co. on 30 Sep (JV).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: This species was widely reported throughout the period with the first on 12 Aug at Fairfield (DCP).

Carolina Wren: This species is widely reported now in the southern half of the state. Away from this range was 1 throughout the period at Effigy Mounds N.M. (DeC). Noteworthy were 12 at Mark Twain N.W.R. in Louisa Co. on 28 Aug (PCP).

House Wren: The only report was 1 in Ida Co. on 15 Oct (PE).

Winter Wren: The first were in Cerro Gordo Co. on 22 Sep (CJF) and Winneshiek Co. on 23 Sep (DeC). The last was on 7 Nov in Johnson Co. (JLF).

Sedge Wren: 18 were at the Saylorville Res. on 15 Aug (BE), and 10 were at Snake Creek M. on 26 Sep (DCP). The last was 1 killed by a cat in Ida Co. on 9 Oct (PE).

Marsh Wren: 5-10 were at Snake Creek M. on 26 Sep (MPr, DCP).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: The high count was 26 on 8 Nov in Kossuth Co. (MCK).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: The first was on 30 Aug at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (JLF). The peak was 8 on 12 Oct at Fairfield (DCP). The last was on 27 Nov at L. Macbride (THK).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: The first was on 15 Aug in Johnson Co. (JLF), and the last was on 10 Sep, also in Johnson Co. (DLD).

Eastern Bluebird: Flocks of 45 and 39 were seen at Union Grove S.P. on 19 Oct (MPr) and in Kossuth Co. on 22 Nov (MCK), respectively.

Townsend's Solitaire: A single bird was in the Loess Hills n. of Waubonsie S.P. on 13 Nov (THK, JLF).

Veery: The only report was 1 in a Marion backyard 23-29 Aug (JDu).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: The only report was from Red Rock Res. on 5 Sep (JiS).

Swainson's Thrush: The first was on 23 Aug at Squaw Creek P. in Linn Co. (JDu), and the last was on 20 Sep in Wapello Co. (RLC).

Hermit Thrush: The last was at Sioux Center on 12 Oct (JV).

Wood Thrush: Single birds in Marshall and Jasper counties on 14 and 15 Aug (MPr) may have been summer residents. The only other report was from Hickory Hill P. on 4 Sep (THK).

American Robin: The last in Sioux Co. were on 27 Nov (JV).

Gray Catbird: The last was on 9 Nov in Ida Co. (PE).

Brown Thrasher: The last was on 8 Oct in Ida Co. (PE).

American Pipit: The first was 1 on 19 Sep at Saylorville Res. (THK). Others were 2 at Rathbun Res. on 11 Oct (RLC), 8 at Coralville Res. on 20 Oct (THK), 10 at Saylorville Res. on 23 Oct (AMJ), 20 in Boone Co. on 27 Oct (SRL), and 73 at Saylorville Res. on 31 Oct (BE).

Cedar Waxwing: A peak of 252 was at the Saylorville Res. on 1 Nov (BE).

Northern Shrike: The first was on 25 Oct in Cherokee Co. (DBi). Single birds were also reported from Johnson, Cerro Gordo, Allamakee, Marion, and Sioux counties.

Loggerhead Shrike: November reports were from the south, with 3 in Marion Co. on 8 Nov (JLF) and 1 in Johnson Co. on 16 Nov (DLD).

White-eyed Vireo: Single birds were seen at Dudgeon L. in Benton Co. on 1 Aug (JDu) and in Wapello Co. on 20 Sep (RLC).

Bell's Vireo: The last was on 14 Sep in Ida Co. (PE).

Solitary Vireo: 3 were at Hitchcock Nature A. on 28 Sep (BKP/LJP).
Yellow-throated Vireo: The only reports were single birds in Johnson Co. on 6 Sep (DRP) and in Ida Co. on 14 Sep (PE).
Philadelphia Vireo: The only August report was from Johnson Co. on the 13th (JLF)[2nd earliest]. The last was also n. of Iowa City on 1 Oct (JLF).
Red-eyed Vireo: A single bird lingered in a Mason City backyard until 20 Oct (JLW)[3rd latest].
Blue-winged Warbler: The last was on 4 Sep at Hickory Hill P. (THK).
Golden-winged Warbler: This species was widely reported from 16 Aug in Marshall Co. (MPr) to 17 Sep in Tama Co. (MPr). The most were 4 at Call S.P. on 22 Aug (MCK).
Tennessee Warbler: This species returned early, as there were five August reports, with the first on the 14th at Call S.P. (MCK). The peak was 10 at Yellow River F. on 27 Aug (DeC), and the last was on 19 Sep in Linn Co. (JDu).
Orange-crowned Warbler: The first was on 19 Sep at Snake Creek M. (JLF), and the last was at Hitchcock Nature A. on 23 Oct (BKP/LJP).
Nashville Warbler: This species had an extended migration, with the first on 15 Aug at Call S.P. (MCK), and the last on 3 Nov at L. Macbride S.P. (THK)[3rd latest].
Northern Parula: A window kill at Ames on 10 Oct (Max Rothschild, specimen to JJD) was late [ties 2nd latest].
Yellow Warbler: The last was on 14 Sep in Ida Co. (PE).
Chestnut-sided Warbler: Except for a record late bird on 21 Nov at Fairfield (DCP)[record latest], the extremes were both at Grammer Grove on 14 Aug and 19 Sep (MPr). A peak of 21 was recorded at Call S.P. on 27 Aug (MCK).
Magnolia Warbler: The first was on 24 Aug at Grammer Grove (MPr), and the last was on 1 Oct at Cardinal M. (DeC).
Cape May Warbler: All reports were within a narrow range of 6 days, with the first on 3 Sep at Squaw Creek P. in Linn Co. (JDu). The high count of 5 was in Linn Co. on 5 Sep (DLD). The last was on 9 Sep in Mason City (JLW).
Black-throated Blue Warbler: There were more reports than usual for this species, which also had a very narrow migration window. The first were singles on 5 Sep in Marion Co. (JiS) and at Hickory Hill P (JLF), and the last was on 14 Sep in Mason City (JLW-details). Five other reports were from Warren, Johnson, and Allamakee counties.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: The last were 4 on 3 Nov at the Coralville Res. (THK).
Black-throated Green Warbler: The first was on 27 Aug in Warren Co. (AMJ), and the last was at Cardinal M. on 18 Sep (DeC).
Blackburnian Warbler: All reports were from August, with the first on the 13th in Johnson Co., and the last were 3 in Warren Co. on the 27th (AMJ).
Pine Warbler: An ad. male was n. of Iowa City on 6 Sep (JLF).
Palm Warbler: The first was on 19 Sep at Snake Creek M. (JLF), and 1 was still in Warren Co. on 17 Oct (AMJ)[3rd latest].
Bay-breasted Warbler: 3 in Story Co. on 19 Aug (MPr) were the first, while the last was at Mason City on 22 Sep (JLW). A peak of 8 occurred on 27 Aug at Call SP (MCK).
Blackpoll Warbler: Not as common as in the spring, only 1 bird was reported from Call S.P. on 22 Aug (MCK).
Black-and-white Warbler: The first was at Iowa City on 13 Aug (JLF), and the last appeared in Sioux Co. on 16 Oct (JV).
American Redstart: 12 at Effigy Mounds N.M. on 15 Aug may have been summer residents (DeC). The last were 2 on 18 Sep at Cardinal M. (DeC).
Prothonotary Warbler: A bird at Dudgeon L. on 1 Aug was probably a nester (JDu). Singles were also in Kossuth Co. on 19 Aug (MCK), Johnson Co. on 26 Aug (THK), and Dallas Co. on 27 Aug (JiS).
Northern Waterthrush: Singles were at Grammer Grove on 21 Aug (MPr) and a window kill at Mason City on 7 Sep (RG).
Connecticut Warbler: An early bird was in Ida Co. on 20 Aug (PE, details)[ties earliest]. Others were single birds at Grammer Grove on 25 Aug (MPr), Hickory Hill P. on 27-28 Aug (JLF, THK), and n. of Iowa City on 7 Sep (JLF).
Mourning Warbler: The first was on 20 Aug at Grammer Grove (MPr). The last was on 7 Sep at Trumbull L. (LAS). Seven other reports came from Ida, Kossuth, Warren, Grundy, Marshall, and Johnson counties.
Common Yellowthroat: A very late male was at Morgan Creek P. in Linn Co. on 27 Nov (*JBD)[3rd latest].

Canada Warbler: This species was widely reported with the first on 15 Aug at Ledges S.P. (JiS). The high count was 8 at Call S.P. on 27 Aug (MCK), and the last was on 13 Sep at Iowa City (DRP).

Scarlet Tanager: The last was on 20 Sep in Wapello Co. (RLC).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 14 were at Sweet M. in Bremer Co. on 7 Sep (DeC). An imm. male was discovered by Donna Rourick in her Atlantic backyard on 28 Nov (AMJ, *THK, *JLF--photos).

Blue Grosbeak: A probable summer resident was in Lyon Co. on 1 Aug (DCH).

Indigo Bunting: The last was on 2 Oct in Marion Co. (JLF).

Dickcissel: There was only 1 report of a single bird on 12 Oct in Boone Co. (SRL).

Rufous-sided Towhee: This species was thought to be very scarce this fall in the NW (JV).

American Tree Sparrow: The first were on 18 Oct at Saylorville Res. (THK) and 19 Oct at Union Grove S.P. (MPr).

Clay-colored Sparrow: 2 were at Moorehead P. in Ida Co. on 14 Oct, and 1 was late on 23 Nov at Union Grove S.P. (MPr-details)[2nd latest].

Field Sparrow: 2 were still at the Coralville Res. on 25 Oct (DRP).

Savannah Sparrow: 33 were seen in Cass Co. on 14 Oct (MAP).

Le Conte's Sparrow: Up to 8 were at Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. 18-26 Sep (DCP-details, THK, JLF, JDu, MPr, AMJ), and 2-12 were s. of Mason City on 7-8 Oct (CJF, JLW, RG).

Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 1 was at the Saylorville Res. on 3 Oct (BE). All other reports were of 1-3 at Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. 18-26 Sep (DCP-details, THK, JLF, JDu, MPr, AMJ).

Fox Sparrow: The first was on 4 Oct at Grammer Grove (MPr).

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first were 2 on 19 Sep at Snake Creek M. (JLF). The peak of 24 was in Ida Co. on 26 Sep (PE). The last on 28 Oct were in Ida Co. (PE).

Swamp Sparrow: 50 were at Snake Creek M. on 26 Sep (DCP).

White-throated Sparrow: The first were on 12 Sep in Johnson Co. (JLF) and on 13 Sep in Allamakee Co. (JiS).

White-crowned Sparrow: The first was on 30 Sep in Ida Co. (PE).

Harris's Sparrow: The first was on 22 Sep at Moorehead P. (PE). Single birds reported from the east were in Allamakee Co. (DeC, LAS), Johnson Co. (DRP), and Linn Co. (JBD fide DLD).

Dark-eyed Junco: 1 appeared at Trumbull L. in Clay Co. on 19 Sep (LAS)[3rd earliest]. Birds of the Oregon race were reported from Cerro Gordo Co. (RG, JLW).

Lapland Longspur: 1 was early on 6 Sep in Scott Co. (PCP)[record earliest]. There were flocks of 150-200 in Marshall Co. on 2 Nov (MPr) and Dallas Co. on 26 Nov (RLC).

Snow Bunting: The first were 2 on 27 Oct in Muscatine Co. (DCD); 29 Oct was quite early for a flock as large as 400 in Cerro Gordo Co. (CJF). Other reports from Nov were 1-4 birds in Johnson, Linn, and Marion counties.

Bobolink: 25 were thought to be migrants in Sioux Co. on 25 Sep (JV).

Western Meadowlark: 1 in Jefferson Co. on 1 Aug was considered unusual (DCP).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: The only report was of 17 at Saylorville Res. on 29 Aug (PA/RA).

Rusty Blackbird: The first were 20 on 30 Oct at De Soto N.W.R. (BKP/LJP). Other large flocks were seen on 8 Nov, with 80 at Rice L. (DeC) and 375 in Kossuth Co. (MCK).

Brewer's Blackbird: Details were provided for 13 in Cherokee Co. (DBi-details) and 2 at Red Rock Res. (MPr-details), both groups seen on 7 Nov.

Common Grackle: Large flocks were 5,000 at Fairfield on 20 Sep (DCP), and 40,000 at Rathbun Res. on 7 Nov (RLC). Single birds were still present on 23 Nov in Cass Co. (MAP), on 24 Nov in Mason City (CJF-details), and at the end of the period in Sioux Co. (JV).

Purple Finch: The first 2 appeared on 11 Sep in Clayton Co. (MPr).

Red Crossbill: The only reports were of 1 in Cherokee Co. on 18 Oct (LAS) and 3 at L. Ahquabi S.P. on 15 Nov (AMJ).

Common Redpoll: All reports were of single birds; on 1 Nov at Red Rock Res. (AMJ), on 21 Nov in Cherokee Co. (DBi), and at a Sioux Center feeder on 29 Nov (JV).

Pine Siskin: September reports were of 3 on the 19th at Hitchcock Nature A. (BKP, LJP), and 8 at Saylorville Res. on the 27th (JDu). They were considered exceptionally abundant at Sioux Center at the end of the period (JV).

American Goldfinch: 3 were still in the nest on 20 Sep at Fairfield (DCP).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Apparently established n. of Burlington, birds were seen there throughout the period; 2 on 27 Aug (THK, JLF), 7 Sep (THK), 2 Oct (PCP), and 20 Nov (THK).

CONTRIBUTORS

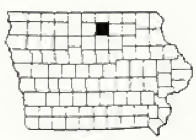
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EURASIAN WIGEON IN CERRO GORDO COUNTY

RANDALL PINKSTON



On 18 March 1992 at 11 a.m. I was birding along Cerro Gordo County Road S14 approximately four miles south of Ventura. I turned east onto County Road B43 (210th St.) and stopped the car to look at some waterfowl on an irrigation ditch crossing the field to the north.

My attention was first drawn to a large duck swimming away from me with its head turned left (Figure 1). It was flanked by two male American Wigeons that were similar in size. Its head and neck were bright cinnamon-buff, bringing to mind a male Redhead or a female merganser before I fully realized what I was viewing. But the head lacked a Redhead's rounded profile, and the color was not quite red enough. Additionally, the forehead and crown were pale buff. In other respects the bird was similar to the American Wigeons. Its petite "dabbler" bill was pale blue-gray with a black tip and edges, wrong for either Redhead or merganser. The eye appeared dark.

The breast was not seen due to the viewing angle but the sides were finely vermiculated silver-gray, distinctly different from the warm liver hue on the American Wigeons. The posterior flanks formed a broad white crescent on each side, framing the black crissum and undertail coverts. A large white patch was visible on the wing coverts. It was clearly a male Eurasian Wigeon.

Within a minute the three wigeons took off and flew in a narrow circle to the north and east before returning to the ditch. In flight, the bird was again similar in size to the American Wigeons. The striking upperwing pattern was also similar with large white patches on the wing coverts and white inner secondaries contrasting with a dark

speculum. The gray sides on the Eurasian Wigeon versus the brown sides on the two American Wigeons was distinct in flight as well. The belly was white. I did not pay particular attention to the underwing/axillaries and did not notice any difference there between the three birds.

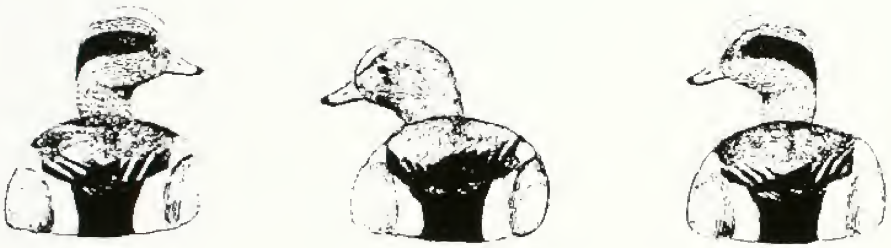


Figure 1. Male Eurasian Wigeon with American Wigeons in Cerro Gordo County, 18 March 1992. Drawing by the author.

I left a few minutes later when the ducks swam out of view around a bend in the ditch. I immediately notified Mason City birders and the Iowa Bird Line. Unfortunately, the Eurasian Wigeon was not seen again despite extensive searching by several parties over the next few days.

The Eurasian Wigeon breeds across the northern Palearctic region from Iceland to northeastern Siberia and winters in southern Eurasia and northern Africa. It was first recorded in North America from New York in 1842. Since then it has become the most frequent Palearctic waterfowl species visiting North America. Records show a regular southward migration in the fall and winter along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and a northward spring migration through the interior (Hasbrouck 1944). Edgell (1984) noted a marked increase in records from western North America since 1966 while those from the east remained static or declined marginally. Reasons for these recent trends are apparently independent of variations in observer factors.

The Eurasian Wigeon is considered accidental in Iowa (Kent and Bendorf 1991) with only four previously accepted records (Dinsmore et al. 1984, Bendorf and Kent 1991). A male from a flock of four was collected at North Twin Lake in Calhoun County in October 1933 (DuMont 1935). Typical of midwest sightings, the other three records involve single males associated with American Wigeons. The first was reported with minimal detail from Rock Creek Lake in Jasper County on 13 April 1972 (Maish 1972). The second was observed at Sweet Marsh in Bremer County on 15-17 April 1984 (Moore and Myers 1984) and the third at Riverton Wildlife Area in Fremont County on 6 March 1991 (Dinsmore 1992). An exceptional midwest sighting of three males and two females near Spirit Lake in Dickinson County on 1-2 April 1985 was not accepted based on concerns about the birds' origin (Kent 1986).

Thanks to Tom Kent for his assistance in the preparation of this note.

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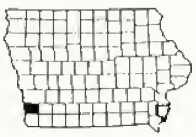
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MERLIN PREYING ON BUTTERFLIES

BARBARA L. WILSON



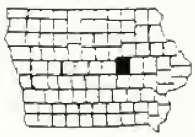
On 13 September 1982 at about 9:30 in the morning, I watched a Merlin hunt butterflies over our farm five miles north of Hastings in Mills County. The Merlin flew above the treetops with a flock of swallows. Occasionally, a swallow would dive on it. At times the falcon would grab at something with its talons. Initially I thought it was catching swallows, but then I realized it was catching smaller prey. Numerous large butterflies were flying near the falcon, and apparently they were the prey. As indicated by their size and the southward movement of the aggregation both high in the air and near ground level, they were monarch butterflies.

When it caught a butterfly, the Merlin would slowly drift downward with wings and tail spread. At the same time it lowered its head and brought the legs forward so it could feed. As the bird ate, butterfly wings would spiral to earth like leaves. Apparently the bird was only eating the body. The Merlin was clearly not deterred by the bad taste of the butterflies, because it caught one after another. Slowly the Merlin, swallows, and butterflies drifted away south. Birds are the main prey of Merlins but occasionally they will eat insects, especially dragonflies (Palmer, R. S. Handbook of North American Birds, vol. 5, Yale Univ. Press, 1988).

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SWIMMING BY A GREAT HORNED OWL

K. P. ALLEN AND ORLANDO A. SCHWARTZ



On 26 October 1991 at 0840 we were hunting pheasants in Tama County, Iowa, 5.0 km east and 10.4 km south of Traer. The day was clear, temperature was approximately 10 C, and a strong wind was blowing from the north. We were in the old-field floodplain of a small stream with a weak current when we saw a fully feathered Great Horned Owl on the ground. As we approached the bird, it moved away from us but stayed on the ground, and we presumed that it was injured or sick since it did not fly. We approached closer, and the owl retreated to the edge of the stream. We again approached and the owl moved into the stream. Its buoyancy was sufficient so that it sat high in the water. It then swan about 2 meters to the far shore, using symmetrical flight-like stokes of its wings with the tips of the primary and some secondary feathers submerged with each stroke. It then grasped a root on the far bank with one foot and pulled itself from the water. The stream there was approximately 50 centimeters deep so it is doubtful that walking aided propulsion, but we could not see if there was any kicking action of the feet. Since there was no random or circular splashing and since the swimming movements were effectively directed at reaching the opposite shore, we presume that we saw the motor mechanisms of flight transferred to a novel situation. Approximately 1.5 hours later we again saw the owl on the ground near the stream bank.

Stewart (*Wilson Bulletin* 88:662, 1975) reported swimming behavior in newly hatched Northern Bobwhite chicks, and he cited swimming behavior in Northern Bobwhite with their flight feathers removed and in turkey poults. On three occasions, Hoffman (*Wilson Bulletin* 53:234, 1941) saw a Black-crowned Night-Heron swim. Neither reference described the swimming motion of these nonaquatic species.

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I.O.U. BUSINESS

FALL BUSINESS MEETING

Lansing, 12 September 1992, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

PRESIDING: ANN M. BARKER, PRESIDENT

The meeting was opened with special thanks to the Upper Iowa Audubon Society, especially Dennis Carter and Mary Jo Hartogh, for hosting and organizing the weekend.

Minutes for the 16 May 1992 business meeting were read and approved (moved by Bud Gode, seconded by Rick Hollis).

Committee Reports

Treasurer: Financial statements for 1 January-31 August 1992 were distributed. Pam Allen reported that the organization is in good financial shape. Interest rates on certificates of deposit have fallen, so interest income will be lower in the future. The endowment and project funds have increased by $613, thanks to Big Day contributions. The 1993 budget will be considered by the Board of Directors at its 7 November meeting.

Membership: There were 42 new members this year, mostly as a result of a mailing by the membership committee to feeder survey participants.

Publications: Pete Petersen reported that the committee met after the spring business meeting. The editors of both journals are doing an outstanding job.

Big Day: Eugene Armstrong reminded members that awards for this year's competition will be presented at the evening banquet.

Breeding Bird Atlas: Jim Dinsmore reported that the committee met in July. Their goal is to have all species accounts written by the end of 1992 but to date progress has been slow.

Education: Hank Zaletel presented an overview of the content of the curriculum booklet. It is ready to be printed, and bids are being obtained. One thousand copies will be printed, and it will be sold for about $2. The membership expressed a strong preference for spiral binding over stapling, despite the extra cost. Linda Zaletel was recognized for her many hours of work writing and producing the book.

Spring Count: Pete Petersen, chair, reported that the committee is recommending that the count be held on the Sunday between 6 and 12 May, and that it be done on a county basis. Rather than publishing all results, they suggested that a summary article containing county totals and interesting observations be prepared for *Iowa Bird Life*, with the actual data available on request only. Barker asked for a written proposal to present to the Board of Directors.

Nominating: Barker has appointed Jim Dinsmore (chair), Beth Brown, and Beth Proescholdt to this committee. They will present nominees for President, Vice President, and three Board of Directors positions to be considered at next spring's meeting.

Field Trips: At the request of the membership, Barker appointed the following to a newly designated field trip committee: Ann Johnson (chair), Babs and Loren Padelford, and Jim Fuller. Another member may be appointed in the near future. The committee will plan four or more field trips per year. A trip is planned to Snake Creek Marsh for Yellow Rails in September and another to Red Rock Reservoir in November.

Old Business

Upcoming Meetings: The spring 1993 meeting is set for Keosauqua, but the dates were changed to 14-16 May so that the entire Manning Hotel could be reserved to accommodate the group.

Rick Hollis reported a poor response to inquiries which had been sent to owners of birding sites which have restricted access. The only reply was from Iowa Illinois Gas and Electric for Big Sand Mound Nature Preserve in Muscatine County; the company does not object as long as advance arrangements are made.

Carol Thompson is finalizing a list of birding organizations in Iowa. Rick Hollis had a copy for members to proof.

Announcements

Jim Dinsmore thanked the many I.O.U. volunteers workers who made the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in June a great success. About 370 people attended.

Pete Petersen reminded members of the Inland Bird Banding Association meeting to be held in Moline at the end of October.

BOOK REVIEW

Iowa Birdlife by Gladys Black. Univ. of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA. 1992. 176 pp., softbound $15.95, hardbound $34.95. This is largely a reprint of the book "Birds of Iowa" by the same author published in 1979. The book starts with a forward by Dean Roosa, an introduction by Carl Kurtz, a short discussion of The Nature Conservancy which sponsored the book, and eleven pages describing eight habitat types and the bird species typical of each. Most of the book consists of 102 short articles about Iowa birds (99 species plus accounts of mergansers, gulls, and swallows). Of these, 70 are reprints of articles from the 1979 book and 32 are new. The articles originally were published in the *Des Moines Register* and more recently in the *Marion County News*.. The content of these articles varies greatly. Many were sparked by a specific sighting and include details of that record along with information on the nesting biology, distribution, or behavior of that species taken from a variety of sources. Many include Gladys' observations on various aspects of the biology and behavior of the species. These personal sightings date back to her childhood in Appanoose and Marion counties and include many from the past 35

years she has spent in the Pleasantville area. Most center on the Red Rock area but others include information from the hundreds of letters Gladys received from around Iowa as a result of the widespread distribution of her newspaper column. These anecdotes in particular add spark to the book.

Each of the accounts has a black and white photograph of the species, most of them by Carl Kurtz or Larry Stone. Most are close up and show the species in question very nicely. In addition, there are 32 color photos showing typical examples of eight of the habitats described along with three representative bird species for each. All but one of these were taken by Carl or Linda Kurtz, and they too are superb photographs that have been reproduced very well. This combination of color and black-and-white illustrations will make the book very attractive to many readers. The book ends with a list of all species known from Iowa compiled from the latest I.O.U. checklist and an index to the species accounts.

Many Iowa birders, especially beginners and the more casual birders, will enjoy this book. Many of Iowa's most common birds are covered, and the combination of an attractive photograph along with a lively discussion of the bird and its habits will appeal to many. Some of the more interesting tidbits I gleaned from my reading include learning that Gladys is probably one of the few birders who has seen wild prairie chickens in Iowa and that shrikes once were killed in Boston to protect the newly imported House Sparrow.

The newspaper articles were published from the 1970s to as recently as 1992 (Pine Warbler). My main criticism of the book is that although the accounts have been edited somewhat from the original newspaper articles, they have not been updated to reflect our current knowledge. Thus information on status, range, name usage, and dates of occurrence of many of the species are not reported here. Simply changing the bird names to reflect current usage would have helped educate many of the book's readers (and erase the confusion they will have now when they find a different name listed for the species in the checklist at the end of the book).

The price is reasonable, especially with the quality of the color photos. This is an attractive addition to the literature on Iowa's birds and will find a ready niche in the still-too-impoverished literature on birds and other wildlife of Iowa.--James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010.

